



# **Open Dance Bands:**

## **Best Practices Shared by 35 Groups**

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## INTRODUCTION

Dear Reader,

The purpose of this resource is to share common best practices used by open dance bands, while also illustrating the diversity of approaches across communities. We hope this resource provides you with a great starting point to launch your own open band or additional inspiration for what you already do.

The resource is based on the input of approximately 40 individuals representing 35 open bands throughout North America. Thank you to all the band leaders and dance organizers who shared their knowledge and expertise to make this resource possible! Their names and contact information are listed in the last section of the document.

## WHO CAN JOIN OPEN BANDS

Almost all bands said that everyone is welcome regardless of age and ability.

*Anyone. Open means open. Carol Ormand, Madison Open Band*

- Most bands use a drop-in model whereby musicians can simply show up and play. However, one band pointed out that musicians are required to attend one rehearsal prior to playing at a dance, while another wrote that musicians have to regularly attend rehearsals and that drop-ins are not allowed. Yet another band stated that they do a bit of 'vetting'. That same band noted that musicians will be contacted ahead of time to create a roster of who will play.
- A few bands noted that it is important to select who is playing the piano because it's the piano that keeps the rest of the musicians playing together.

*Our only really discriminatory criteria concern the keyboard players. We need them to be really solid. A secondary consideration is developing practical music theory application, i.e., playing "groovy" chords, which happens mainly informally by those with the knowledge teaching the others. Steve Epstein, SPUDS*

- Several leaders mentioned that they try to manage 'overbearing', 'percussive' or 'loud electronic instruments' (e.g., these instruments must get cleared by the leader ahead of time; a leader may need to talk to someone if they are playing a loud instrument without regard for others).
- A few respondents noted that they only mic (amplify) a few experienced musicians.
- One leader pointed out that their group sometimes spotlights youth.

*Everyone is welcome to join the band as long as they are respectful of sound constraints and people. When youngsters join in, it's usually prepared in advance with their teacher/tutor, and we sometimes have a "spotlight" for them during the waltz for example. Complete beginners are not naturally drawn to this kind of event, and we haven't had any disrespectful players going out*

*of bounds. All instruments are welcome, and we mostly have fiddles, accordions, guitars, pianos, and sometimes a flute, a mandolin, a bass or upright bass, wooden spoons, and a snare drum. Many players enjoy tapping their feet simultaneous to playing, and we always have one of the leaders tapping on an amplified tapping board, which I think helps with overall rhythm consistency. Martin Aucoin, Grand Orchestre Maréemusique*

Some leaders wrote about the types of instruments played at their dances. They include: fiddle, piano/keyboard, guitar, mandolin, bass (acoustic/electric), accordion (piano/button), concertina, banjo (tenor/5-string), clarinet, oboe, bassoon, tuba, trombone, flute, recorder, hammered dulcimer, autoharp, harp, trumpet, saxophone, domra, hand drums, wooden spoons, snare drum, foot board. The sky seems to be the limit in terms of diversity!

## RECRUITING MUSICIANS

Word-of-mouth is the most common approach to recruiting musicians. Below are some specific examples of word-of-mouth recruitment as well as other strategies that bands use.

- Promote the opportunity at dances as some dancers also play instruments (e.g., make an announcement; chat with dancers).
- Reach out to the musicians that already play in local dance bands.
- Promote the opportunity at local jam sessions.
- Encourage local music teachers to bring their students.
- Maintain a website with information.
- Post on Facebook.
- Write an article for a local publication.
- Promote at the local college.
- Make sure that musicians know about the open-door policy, and that they are welcome any time without commitment.

*Yes! A lot of word of mouth, but reaching out to fiddle teachers and music schools in the area has helped greatly. Emily Troll, The Pic'd Up Orchestra*

A few leaders pointed out that they don't do any active recruitment since they have already too many musicians (e.g., can't fit everyone on the stage).

# THE ROLE OF BAND LEADERS

All of the bands we heard from have a leader(s) of some sort, although there were different titles depending on the context: Director, organizer, coordinator, leader, wrangler, and mentor.

Different bands structure the roles in different ways. For instance, a few groups have a coordinator that hires different leaders for each dance. More common though is to have one or two leaders organize everything, sometimes splitting up the tasks (e.g., administrative coordinator vs. leader the night of the dance).

## Organizational tasks ahead of the dance

Band leaders take on a number of organizational tasks.

Common tasks include:

- Sending out emails about upcoming gigs.
- Maintaining a list of tunes (e.g., online tune book; formatting tunes in both ABC [abcnotation.com](http://abcnotation.com) and PDF). At least one band pointed out that they have a separate volunteer who provides tune notation.
- Circulating the tunes/sets that will be played ahead of time.

*Eric Rounds hand scored the music, and selects the sets a few weeks in advance. Communicates with members via email. A band member has been entering tunes into a program for making nice scores. We keep a few books, and one in B flat key for people who sight read. [For concert pitch instruments] Bob Fabinski, Country Dancers of Rochester Open Band*

Tasks mentioned less often include:

- Finding gigs, coordinating with dance organizers, and receiving feedback.
- Making recordings for musicians to practice with.
- Ensuring key players will be present.
- Letting the sound tech know ahead of the gig about any special arrangements that are needed.
- Including the caller on the pre-notification of the repertoire selected for the dance.
- Coordinating and hosting rehearsals.
- Creating arrangements.

*I write arrangements so that we are assured to have a framework for offering good harmony and bass lines. Dan van Loon, Old Fezziwig's Band*

- Selecting individuals who will lead the band at the dances.

*... Once a year we poll the availability of everyone in our band leader pool and assign leaders (generally two) to each gig. The leaders pick the tunes and put them into medleys. Kim Neubauer, SPUDS*

## Tasks at the dance

There are a number of tasks that the leader takes on at the dance. These include:

- Communicating with the dance manager and sound technician.

- Communicating with the musicians throughout the event (e.g., answering questions from newbies; encouraging the band).
- Deciding which instruments get mic'd.
- Selecting tunes/sets if not done ahead of time.
- Leading the sets, including setting the tempo, start/stops/tune changes, and calling on-the-fly arrangements (e.g., dynamics). Some leaders can play an instrument while also directing the band. Other leaders decide to focus on conducting instead of playing. (Here is an example of conducting from the Pic'd Up Orchestra: [youtu.be/NGMoTUtNon4](https://youtu.be/NGMoTUtNon4))

*I also lead the band at dances, and sometimes that means actually standing up and directing. As the band has grown, directing has become more necessary. In fact, I've been \*asked\* to direct more often. I guess they don't like my playing! :) Keith Holmes, Contra Dan's*

*Conducting is accomplished through hand signals. The band is too big for vocal conducting or even holding up signs. Most of the arrangements are made on the fly, so band members have to watch to see what will happen the next time around. Here is a link to a video from some years back made by Doug Plummer (so quality is good [youtu.be/prKBuFX4mj0](https://youtu.be/prKBuFX4mj0)). At 1:00, I am giving the signal for one more time and play quietly (it's hard to see), at 1:46, I am giving the signal for switching tunes; and at 2:49, there is the signal for crescendo. We have signals for each instrumental section (e.g., next time accordions) and much more. We begin with the signals right away in the rehearsals, so by the time we get to the dance, band members are very familiar with them. When we need a new signal, we usually create it on the spot with the help of the band. Sue Songer, Portland Megaband*

## Remuneration

Roughly half of the leaders are paid while others volunteer. Payment may be a small honorarium or it may involve the same payment as a musician would receive for playing in a hired dance band. One organizer pointed out that their band leaders are paid for leading rehearsals.

While we didn't ask about remuneration for the other musicians, a few organizers pointed out that the money is split among all of musicians, or that the musicians get into the dance for free.

*Payment is very motivating to the musicians! Even though it will never be more than a token, given contra dance budgets and the sheer number of musicians, it's still worth considering. Whenever I've asked a band about unpaid gigs, there's a large segment who says "sure that makes it simpler", and another large section that just deflates and loses their enthusiasm. People like to tell their friends they're paid musicians, and they turn their minds into how to find higher-paid gigs, which encourages them to learn their craft and what people want to hear from a band. So even a small payment really changes the nature of the whole thing. Lex Spoon, Atlanta Open Band*

*We try to make it as easy as possible for anyone who wants to play, to do so, including free admission, and the invitation to join us on the dance floor if desired, for some of the sets. Bob Fabinski, Country Dancers of Rochester Open Band*

# PICKING TUNES AND CREATING SETS

## What to consider when picking tunes

Choice of tunes matters and some leaders put a lot of thought into their choices:

*I put A LOT of thought into the music. We carry over about half the sets from the prior year and add 5 or 6 three-tune sets a year. I look for variety of genre and difficulty levels. I choose at least a couple of sets that are accessible to almost everyone and one or two that many people will have to work for. It is a matter of keeping all experience levels interested without being overwhelmed. I pay attention to the needs of instruments like flutes or banjos so that there are plenty of tunes that will work well on these instruments. We venture a bit into the key of F, but that's as far as we have gone with the less fiddle-friendly tunes.*  
Sue Songer, Portland Megaband

Considerations include:

- **Low note count:** Many groups choose tunes that aren't very notey so that they are accessible to a wide range of players. Tunes with a low note count allow players to focus on playing 'with gusto' rather than trying to jam all the notes in at dance tempo. A few leaders pointed out that they choose tunes at different levels in order to keep a range of players engaged.

*The core of the tune list was passed on to me when I took over the job. They are common contra dance tunes, 2 to a set, not very notey. Last year I added a few new tunes for the first time in probably more than 10 years.* Bill Quern, The Big Squeeze

- **Clear beat:** One band leader pointed out that they choose tunes that have a strong, easily-defined beat to help the musicians and dancers.
- **Standards:** Some band leaders noted that they select common tunes played in their local community in order to make the tunes more accessible for drop-in players.
- **Tunes in accessible keys:** Leaders mentioned selecting tunes that are in keys that are accessible to a wide range of instruments (e.g., flutes and banjos).
- **Tunes with different feels:** Consider sets of tunes with different feels (e.g., bouncy, driving, smooth).
- **Tune types:** Bands not only play jigs and reels but also marches, polkas and other styles for contra and community dances.

*Our repertoire is quite a mix of tunes -- jigs, reels, marches, a few polkas. New England, southern old-time, Irish, Quebecois, Scottish, Eastern European, ..... Carol Ormand, MOB (Madison Open Band)*

## Tune sources

Leaders mentioned a variety of styles and sources of tunes. These included:

- Tunes from the following traditions: Traditional New England, Quebecois, Scottish, Irish, Southern Old-time, Eastern European and common contra dance tunes.
- Two tune books: *The Portland Collection* and *The Fiddlers Fakebook*.

In the last section of this document, check out the websites for various open bands as some list their tunes and/or provide the tune notation online.

## How tune lists and sets are made

- **Maintaining a tune/set list:** It's common for bands to develop a core list of tunes/sets over time.
- **Who chooses the tunes:** In many cases, the band leader develops the tune list. A few leaders mentioned that they take suggestions from other musicians or that others are involved in choosing the tunes. The Outstanding Open Band has an annual gathering to try out new tunes.

*At the annual summer camp-out people bring new tune sets to try out. We set up a tune list for the year, keeping old favorites and adding new ones.* Sharon Rogers, Coos Bay Outstanding Open Band

*Prior to this year, we had a set list of paired tunes. The band leader would look at the caller's card and pick a set of tunes. This year, we have decoupled all our tunes and the leader is bringing more people into the tune decisions. Now we figure out what tunes will work for the dance.* Stephen Bobic, Atlanta Open Band

- **When to add new tunes:** Some groups add a few new tunes every dance, while others add new tunes less often (e.g., once a year). One band mentioned choosing tunes on-the-fly with no advance warning as long as there is a quorum of players who know the tune. These differences likely have to do with the regularity of attendance, the number of players, the experience level of the musicians, and the sound the band is trying to achieve.
- **Creating sets ahead of time or on-the-fly:** Some bands have defined sets (e.g., three tunes always played together) while others create the sets at the dance by choosing tunes off their set list.
- **Number of tunes in a set:** Leaders wrote about putting together sets of two or three tunes, with some pointing out that they combine tunes from different keys (e.g., Gmaj into Dmaj into Amaj).
- **Number of tunes/sets:** Some groups maintain a relatively small number of sets to make the list accessible to drop-ins and new players. Other groups have built up a long tune list over time.
- **Number of sets needed for a dance:** One long-standing open band wrote about having 8-10 reel sets, 2-3 jig sets, 2 waltzes, and 1 couples dance ready for an evening contra dance.

## Tunes for ECD dances

Given that tunes match the dances in English Country Dance, open ECD bands use a different approach. Here are some strategies:

*Callers pick the tunes out of Barnes 1, 2, and now 3 because callers pick the dances ...* Steve Epstein, Germantown Country Dancers Open Band

*Since we meet only twice a year, there is no gig book. The caller decides on the tunes and then we learn them. We try to stay away from complicated tunes and tunes in hard key signatures but most*



## FREQUENCY OF GIGS

There is great diversity in the frequency with which open bands play for dances.

# of bands	Frequency of dances
2	Weekly
0	2-4 times a month
4	Approx. 1 time a month
8	Approx. 6-8 times a year
10	Approx. 3-5 times a year
8	Approx. 1-2 times a year

Note: A few bands mentioned that they hold rehearsals, but the numbers above don't include practices.

## REHEARSALS

Over half of the survey respondents noted that their band holds some form of rehearsal.

### Overall format

The format of the rehearsals varies widely.

- A number of leaders pointed out that rehearsals are not mandatory.
- A few leaders pointed out that practicing happens at jam sessions.
- Some bands hold one rehearsal ahead of each gig while others gather more often (e.g., twice a month; seven rehearsals for the Portland Megaband ahead of their big annual performance)

*There are 7 rehearsals for the Megaband, which are held in the space where we have our dances. There is an orientation for newcomers before the first rehearsal. The first 6 rehearsals are two hours long, and the last one is four hours. We go over the tunes new to the band in the first rehearsal and work out any questions. During the next three rehearsals, we play through all the sets and waltzes working out transitions and some arrangements. We do not play to speed. We do pick up the pace during the last 3 rehearsals both in time spent on each set and actual tempo of the tunes. We play through everything at the last rehearsal. I put thought into what we play at each rehearsal mixing familiar sets from the year before with new sets and easier sets with harder sets. Visitors are welcome at all of the rehearsals, and we often have them. But only band members can play. Sue Songer, Portland Megaband*

- While some groups practice in the evening, others choose a weekend afternoon, or even the afternoon ahead of the dance with a potluck squeezed in between. At least one leader pointed out that they hold a mini rehearsal right before the dance.
- Many leaders mentioned that they host rehearsals in homes, while others mentioned using public spaces.

### What happens at rehearsals

Many leaders wrote that their rehearsals include a lot of time spent reading through and teaching/learning the tunes. In addition, a few leaders mentioned that they:

- Work on details such as playing well together, making tune transitions, encouraging improvisation, and creating arrangements (e.g., passing the melody to soloists and sections; vocal harmonies or everyone singing; practicing 'tricks').
- Discuss topics such as band communication during the dance, the basic structure and organization of the dance, tempo, and how playing for dancing is different than playing in other settings.
- Divide the musicians up into smaller groups so that not all of the sets are a 'big wall of sound' at the dance.
- Record the tunes for musicians to learn at home.
- And last, but definitely not least, many bands include snacks and socializing as part of their rehearsals.

*Rehearsal happens at 4:00-5:30 for the dance that starts at 9:30. We play through tunes. Talk about the hand signals that I will use. Try some rhythmic variations. Talk about "playing the dance", emphasizing balances, phrasing that fits the figures, tricks like going up and down the scale when the dancers go up and down the hall... Bill Quern, NES Open Band or the Big Squeeze*

*During a rehearsal:*

*-We play through any new or challenging tunes, often slowly but not too slowly.*

*-We play a medley or two that we haven't played in a while.*

*-We focus on specific ensemble challenges such as the jig to reel transition.*

*-We work on individual musicianship such as intonation and separating notes for a cleaner sound.*

*-Although we have a default road map, for some tunes we create a special arrangement. We might review one of those or work on a new one. If we work on a new one, there's a lot of back-and-forth discussion and trying out of ideas.*

*-Most of the rehearsal is spent on jigs and reels with one or two waltzes at the end. If this is the rehearsal before a dance that the band will play, we'll pick the waltzes for that dance.*

*-We discuss any upcoming gigs and we may set a date for the next rehearsal.*

*Keith Holmes, Contra Dan's*

*So, we occasionally get together to talk about those differences and to practice varying how we play the tunes, listening, and responding to each other's musical ideas. We also practice playing the music to match the dances, emphasizing balances, or smoothing out phrases to match smooth choreography, for example. These gatherings also allow the callers in the band to talk about the caller's perspective and answer other musicians' questions about how the dances and tunes fit together. Carol Ormand, Madison Open Band (This text was originally published in the CDSS News)*

English country dance bands require a slightly different model as they are playing different tunes for each dance. Here's how one group handles their rehearsals:

*Our rehearsals begin three weeks before the dance. They get the music two weeks before that. We play for 2 hours each rehearsal. The first one we just run the tunes and work on interpretation. 2nd and third rehearsals we work on harmonies and road maps (who is going to play, trading offs, etc.). Laura Kuhlman, Portland English Community Band*

### Some groups don't hold rehearsals

A few respondents pointed out that they stopped holding rehearsals because they no longer seemed necessary or useful.

*We used to have rehearsals, but not so much in recent years. We have a quorum of ringers who come and anchor the band, forming a safe space for less skilled players. But that has been carefully built up over the years. Pat Palmer, PCD Pickup Band*

One leader pointed out that they wish they held practices:

*I wish that we had rehearsals, but we don't. The open band is usually quite good, but could be excellent with some practice. Hal Schnee, TCD Open Band*

## TIPS FOR SUCCESS

We asked the survey respondents to list up to three tips for success. Here are their responses:

### Musicianship

Over half of the band leaders wrote about musicianship.

Many pointed out that while their band is open to all levels of players, it's important to have a strong core of musicians or at least one strong melody player and one strong accompanist. A number of respondents mentioned the importance of having a strong rhythm section to define the beat.

*Strong rhythm section [guitar, piano, drum] capable of delivering the most important element for this type of performance—STEADY TEMPO. Dan van Loon, Chicagoland English Country Dance*

*Make sure you have a solid rhythm section and that all the musicians understand that dance rhythms trump all other considerations. John Bloom, Contra Dan's*

*Having a strong player lead is key. This person is generally gracious and helpful if someone is not familiar with a tune. We frequently also have "ringers". Lynn Garren, Chicago Barn Dance Company*

Separate from having a strong core of players, leaders wrote about the advantage of having rehearsals so that musicians can learn the music and build their skills (e.g., how to listen to the other players).

*We have a practice session a week or so before and practice doing transitions and following the conducting signs. The focus is really on ensemble playing, so everyone feels welcome whether or not they are skilled at tunes. Both lead players come to the rehearsal, so everyone sounds awesome because of them. Emily Troll, Pic'd Up Orchestra*

*We rehearse only once per gig. Nothing is required, but we constantly remind musicians to "play for the dance", as we're not performing so much as creating a great dance experience. We offer occasional musician workshops and sometimes provide informal coaching at rehearsals. Kim Neubauer, SPUDS*

*Come up with a list of the key elements that make dance music exciting and then work on those. For example, strategies for everyone to be tight on timing; driving the energy at the end of the tune/B2 back up into the A1; common chord tricks that the leader can call out which create excitement for the dancers. Emily Addison, Ottawa All Comers Band*

### Strong leadership

Almost half of the survey respondents wrote about the importance of strong leadership. Various assets that were mentioned include:

- Strong social skills
- Good teaching skills
- Communicating and leading while playing
- Being welcoming and encouraging
- Having enthusiasm for what the group is doing.

*We use conducting signs! Credit: NEFFA festival orchestra. I am a strict leader, and enforce the sign-following with a friendly attitude. If we're playing soft, we are ALL playing soft! When people remember to watch, the group really sounds dynamite, but it does take some reminding to get everybody on board. Emily Troll, Pic'd Up Orchestra*

*Enthusiasm in leadership: Show the musicians that you are keen and inspire them to be excited in participating and playing. That encourages them to show up, have a great time, and that spreads to the dance floor. Emily Addison, Ottawa All Comers Band.*

Two organizers mentioned that rotating leaders encouraged more musicians to engage, and one organizer mentioned that it's good to provide training for new leaders.

*Training, support and mentoring for "new" bandleaders until they get comfortable with the whole process. Pat Palmer, Princeton Country Dancers*

### Positive band culture

Approximately one third of the leaders wrote about aspects of positive band culture. These included:

- Keep the activity fun (e.g., lots of laughter).  
*I have often been approached by people wanting to have something like the Portland Megaband in their own community. I always advise to start with whoever is available and interested. Make it fun, and it will grow. The first time the Portland Megaband played (1996), we had 25 musicians, two disorganized rehearsals, and a very ragged performance. But the energy was there—it almost always is when a large group of musicians pulls together—and it caught on rapidly. Sue Songer, Portland Megaband*
- Create an atmosphere that encourages beginners and helps everyone feel welcome, included, and valued.  
*Make everyone feel included and valuable. Not everyone can be playing the melody on their instrument, so giving musicians opportunities to add to the texture of the music with chords, counter melodies, percussion, etc. is a way to give them an important role. Oliver Gaffney, Round Hill Country Dancers*  
*All are really and truly welcomed and enthusiastically applauded. Julia Plumb, Belfast Flying Shoes*  
*People who can curb their egos and have fun as fellows—rolling with the mistakes and imperfections. Dan van Loon, Chicagoland English Country Dancers*
- Include social gatherings to build community.  
*[...] having social outings for the band to build cohesion and play music just for fun, working on more than repertoire. Darrell Webb, Chattahoochee Contra Dancers*  
*We enjoy each others company and look forward to spending time together. We have an annual camp-out weekend that helps in getting to know family and spouses. Sharon Rogers, South Coast Folk Society*
- Create a 'democratic' space where musicians can have input, or where everyone can participate as a leader.

*It's our band. It's not run by a few select people. Anyone who wants to can apply to be a co-leader (we usually have two leaders) and if they're inexperienced at putting together a tune*

*list and leading the band we give them help. Steve Epstein, SPUDS*

- Play for family and friends.

### Selecting repertoire

Approximately one-third of the respondents wrote about tune and/or set selection. Comments included:

- Use standard tunes from the local area.
- Select the sets/tunes and share that information with the musicians ahead of the dance, including the order of the dances.

*I get the dance plan from the caller before the dance so that I can match the tunes with the dances ahead of time. I send this list out to the band. This saves a lot of worry and hassle and is much appreciated, even if sometimes we have to modify per the caller's request. Martha Wild, San Diego Folk Heritage*

- Ensure a variety of tunes that are accessible to a range of players.
- Select tunes that the musicians will enjoy playing.

*Life is too short to play boring music! Pick tunes that the band will want to practice and play together. Oliver Gaffney, Round Hill Country Dancers*

### Good communication

Approximately one-quarter of the leaders wrote about various aspects of communication.

Many of the comments related to sharing information about the tunes with the musicians (e.g., posting the music notation on a website, emailing the music and set lists ahead of time).

*Well-organized music, clear scores posted in one place. Jake Moskowitz, The LITMA Contra Band*

*Make it easy for musicians: We provide the medleys well in advance, and in multiple formats. There is printable music on our website. Kim Neubauer, SPUDS*

A few other respondents wrote about the need for clear communication on gig information (e.g., set up time for gigs) and expectations (e.g., welcoming and fun for all).

### Space and sound set-up

Several leaders wrote about the importance of ensuring a good set-up prior to starting a gig. Suggestions included:

- Asking for an RSVP ahead of time to arrange the set-up if space is tight.
- Limiting the number of microphones to more competent musicians.
- Putting one ambient mic over the whole band as people will 'take it more seriously'.
- Setting up one microphone per section (e.g., fiddles; guitars) for those who don't want individual mics. That way, the sound is captured without having too many mics.
- One leader said that they like to mic all 12-15 musicians and have lots of monitors. They pointed out that their set-up is challenging.
- Asking musicians to arrive early in order to ensure a good sound check.

*Extra time beforehand for seating arrangement, setup and sound check. Lots of musicians on stage is a nightmare for PA techs, mikes, pickups, monitor connections become more complex. The big payoff is the band being able to hear each other and a better sound out to the dancers. Charlie Muse, Triangle Country Dancers*

### Other tips for success

Other tips for success included:

- Build a shared vision for the band, so that everyone understands what the group is trying to accomplish.
- Allow musicians to choose their own level of commitment.
- Provide snacks (chocolate!) to the musicians.
- Allow the musicians in for free (if not paying them).
- Acknowledge the financial support that the band provides to the organization.
- Value the heritage, history, and continuity among long-time members.
- Invite guest musicians to 'keep things fresh'.
- Make it easy for musicians to join.
- Gather the group in various contexts.  
*Have convergent activities like jam sessions, group workshops, student concerts happening around or linked to the main event. Martin Aucoin, Maréemusique*
- Celebrate the band as part of the larger community scene.

*The open band events are really celebrated by the whole community. Everybody helps to hype it beforehand. We sometimes do it on a costume night or an anniversary night or something. So there's a very festive togetherness energy going on. Emily Troll, Pic'd Up Orchestra*

## LAST THOUGHTS FROM BAND LEADERS

We asked band leaders for any final comments. Here are some thoughts not reflected in previous sections:

- **Sit-in musicians:** A few band leaders talked about allowing 'back row sit-in' musicians to play with the hired band. While this is a different model than a fully open band, it's well worth considering as another way of encouraging local musicians.
- **Open bands can breed gigging bands:** A few leaders wrote about how open bands are a great way for musicians to gain experience playing for dances, and that they can be a launching pad for the creation of more formalized dance bands.  
*Lots of bands have formed because people met in SPUDS and those are the bands that now fill the needs of about 6 dances around Philadelphia. Bill Quern, SPUDS*
- **The benefits of open bands:** While we didn't ask about this, a few respondents highlighted some of the benefits. They included: Motivates musicians to practice, brings different people out to the dance, builds friendships among players, nurtures future dance musicians, and builds a wider sense of community within the local dance scene. In some instances where musicians are donating their time, it's also a way for a dance community to have an affordable band.



- **Workshops:** A few leaders mentioned that they offer learning opportunities to their open band members through workshops offered by hired dance bands.  
*We did host a workshop for our band with one of the evening dance bands. It was a success and we plan to do this again. Julia Plumb, Belfast Flying Shoes*

## OPEN BANDS AND LEADERS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE SURVEY

Band Name	Band Website	Contact Name	Contact Email Address	Name of Dance Community	Dance Community Website	Location	Type of Dances Play For
Country Dancers of Rochester Open Band	<a href="http://drochester.org/resources/open-band-nights/">drochester.org/resources/open-band-nights/</a>	Bob Fabinski	bobfab@aol.com	Country Dancers of Rochester	<a href="http://drochester.org">drochester.org</a>	Rochester, NY	Contra
PCDC Open Contra Band	No band-specific website	Dave Hamlin	Davehamlin01@gmail.com	Portland Country Dance Community	<a href="http://portlandcountrydance.org/dance-schedule/">portlandcountrydance.org/dance-schedule/</a>	Portland, OR	Contra
*No official name				Contramontreal	<a href="http://contramontreal.org">contramontreal.org</a>	Montreal, QC	Contra
No official name	None	Lynn Garren	Lynn.garren@gmail.com	Chicago Barn Dance Company	<a href="http://chicagobarndance.org/">chicagobarndance.org/</a>	Chicago, IL	Barn, contra, squares
*No official name	None	Shirley Carlberg	nonesuch_1998@yahoo.com	Contraire Dance Assoc.	<a href="http://bereacontradance.org">bereacontradance.org</a>	Berea, KY	Contra
Atlanta Open Band	<a href="http://atlantaopenband.org/">atlantaopenband.org/</a>	Ralph Reiley , Lex Spoon, Stephen Bobic, Darrell Webb, Harvey Young	reileys@att.net, lex@lexspoon.org, smbobic@gmail.com, dlwo193@gmail.com, commercely@earthlink.net	Chattahoochee Contra Dancers	<a href="http://contradance.org">contradance.org</a>	Atlanta, GA	Contra + occasional waltz, squares, and other oddities
Baltimore Open Band (BOB)	None	Carl Friedman (member)	carlfriedman@alumni.williams.edu	Baltimore Folk Music Society	<a href="http://bfms.org">bfms.org</a>	Baltimore, MD	Contra
Band of Fools	No band-specific website	Pat MacPherson	Dancer.pmm@gmail.com	Revels North	<a href="http://evelsnorth.org/">evelsnorth.org/</a>	White River Junction, VT	Family and community dance
Belfast All Comers Band	<a href="http://belfastflyingshoes.org/all-comers-band/">belfastflyingshoes.org/all-comers-band/</a>	Julia Plumb	juliaplumb@yahoo.com	Belfast Flying Shoes	<a href="http://belfastflyingshoes.org/">belfastflyingshoes.org/</a>	Belfast, ME	Community and contra
Contra Dan's	<a href="http://hatds.org/contradans">hatds.org/contradans</a>	John Bloom and Keith Holmes	jnjbloom@gmail.com and keithholmes@runbox.com	HATDS	<a href="http://hatds.org">hatds.org</a>	Houston, TX	Contra
English Roses		Mary Ann Sereth	masereth@sbcglobal.net	English Roses is the band, Culver City ECD is the organization		Los Angeles, CA	ECD
Germantown Country Dancers Open Band	<a href="http://germantowncountrydancers.org/musicians.php">germantowncountrydancers.org/musicians.php</a>	Steve Epstein	sdepstein@yahoo.com	Germantown Country Dancers	<a href="http://germantowncountrydancers.org/musicians.php">germantowncountrydancers.org/musicians.php</a>	Lancaster, PA	ECD
Glen Echo Open Band (GEOB)	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/groups/378828322221398/">facebook.com/groups/378828322221398/</a>	Carl Friedman (member)	carlfriedman@alumni.williams.edu	Friday Night Dancers	<a href="https://www.fridaynightdance.com">https://www.fridaynightdance.com</a>	Glen Echo, MD	Contra

Grand Orchestre Maréemusique		Martin Aucoin	aucoin.martin@gmail.com	Maréemusique	<a href="http://Mareemusique.com">Mareemusique.com</a>	Levis, QC	Squares, quadrilles, cotillons, waltzes
Les tout croches				Balfolk Montreal	<a href="http://balfolkmontreal.com">balfolkmontreal.com</a>	Montreal, QC	Balfolk
The LITMA Contra Band	<a href="http://litma.org/joining-the-band/">litma.org/joining-the-band/</a>	Jake Moskowitz	jm@optonline.net	LITMA	<a href="http://litma.org">litma.org</a>	New York City, NY	Contra, subset plays for English
Madison Open Band, aka "the MOB"		Carol Ormand	carolormand@yahoo.com	Madison contra dance	<a href="http://madisoncontra.org">madisoncontra.org</a>	Madison, WI	Contras and squares
Monday Night All Stars	<a href="http://tedsims.com/lcd">tedsims.com/lcd</a>	Ted Sims	ted@louisvillecountrydancers.org	Louisville Country Dancers	<a href="http://louisvillecountrydancers.org">louisvillecountrydancers.org</a>	Louisville, KY	Contra
NESI Open Band or the Big Squeeze	<a href="http://squeeze-in.org/ContraMusicInfo.html">squeeze-in.org/ContraMusicInfo.html</a>	Bill Quern	QuernBill@gmail.com	North East Squeeze In	<a href="http://squeeze-in.org">squeeze-in.org</a>	Becket, MA	Contra
Old Fezziwig's Band	Have a domain but not yet built a site OldFezziwigsBand.com	Dan van Loon	danvanloon1@gmail.com	Chicagoland English Country Dance	<a href="http://chicagolandecd.org">chicagolandecd.org</a>	Batavia, IL	ECD
Ottawa All Comers Bands	<a href="http://ottawacontra.ca/all-comers-band/">ottawacontra.ca/all-comers-band/</a>	Emily Addison	EmilyLAddison@gmail.com	Old Sod Folk Music Society of Ottawa	<a href="http://ottawacontra.ca">ottawacontra.ca</a>	Ottawa, ON	Community barn dance
Outstanding Open Band	No band-specific website	Sharon Rogers	singingsharon@gmail.com	South Coast Folk Society	<a href="http://southcoastfolksociety.com">southcoastfolksociety.com</a>	Coos Bay, OR	Contra, ECD, and some international
Patchwork Players	<a href="http://tapestryfolkdance.org/">tapestryfolkdance.org/</a>	Ken Steffenson	kensteffenson@aol.com	Tapestry Dance Center		Minneapolis, MN	Contra
PCD Pickup Band (also Mixed-Age Dance, or "MAD" band)	subpages off of main website	Pat Palmer	pgpalmer@gmail.com	Princeton Country Dancers	<a href="http://princetoncountrydancers.org/">princetoncountrydancers.org/</a>	Princeton, NJ	Contra (mostly)
Portland English Community Band	No band-specific website.	Laura Kuhlman	shawm1550@gmail.com	Portland Country Dance	<a href="http://portlandcountrydance.org">portlandcountrydance.org</a>	Portland, OR	ECD
Portland Megaband	<a href="http://portlandmegaband.com">portlandmegaband.com</a>	Sue Songer	suesonger@gmail.com	Portland Country Dance Community	<a href="http://portlandcountrydance.org">portlandcountrydance.org</a>	Portland, OR	Contra
Round Hill Community Band	<a href="http://roundhill.net/communityband">roundhill.net/communityband</a>	Oliver Gaffney	gaffero@gmail.com	Round Hill Country Dances	<a href="http://roundhill.net">roundhill.net</a>	Stamford, CT	Contra
Soup for the Soles		Sonja Walker	sonja.r.walker@verizon.net	Valley Contra Dance	<a href="http://valleycontradance.org">valleycontradance.org</a>	Bethlehem, PA	Contra
Stolen Goods (community band with occasional sit-ins)	See organization website.	Emily Addison	EmilyLAddison@gmail.com	Old Sod Folk Music Society of Ottawa	<a href="http://ottawacontra.ca">ottawacontra.ca</a>	Ottawa, ON	Contras, community, family
Stout Hearted String Band (not open band; we encourage sit ins)		Fred Karsch	fjkarsch@umich.edu	Ann Arbor Community for Traditional Music and Dance	<a href="http://aactmad.org">aactmad.org</a>	Ann Arbor, MI	Contra

Summit Pick-Up Dance Society [SPUDS]	<a href="http://thursdaycontra.com/~spuds/">thursdaycontra.com/~spuds/</a>	Kim Neubauer, Steve Epstein and Bill Quern	kneubauer123@yahoo.com, sdepstein@yahoo.com and QuernBill@gmail.com	PATMAD	<a href="http://thursdaycontra.com/patmad/">thursdaycontra.com/patmad/</a>	Philadelphia, PA	Contra
TCD Open Band	none	Hal Schnee	hal@schnee.com	TCD -Triangle Country Dancers	<a href="http://tcdancers.org">tcdancers.org</a>	Chapel Hill, NC	Contra
The More the Merrier	<a href="http://sandiegocontra.org/our-bands.html">sandiegocontra.org/our-bands.html</a>	Martha Wild	mawildster@gmail.com	San Diego Folk Heritage	<a href="http://sandiegocontra.org">sandiegocontra.org</a>	San Diego, CA	Contra or family dance
The NOB (Neffa Open Band)	<a href="http://neffa.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/NOB-March-5-2019.pdf">neffa.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/NOB-March-5-2019.pdf</a>	Lisa Greenleaf	laleaf@gmail.com	Neffa Thursday Night Contra	<a href="http://neffa.org/thursday-contras/">neffa.org/thursday-contras/</a>	Concord, MA	Contra
The Pic'd Up Orchestra	<a href="http://portlandintowncontradance.com/open-band">portlandintowncontradance.com/open-band</a>	Dugan Murphy and Emily Troll	dugan@duganmurphy.com and etroll@wesleyan.edu	Portland Intown Contra Dance	<a href="http://portlandintowncontradance.com">portlandintowncontradance.com</a>	Portland, ME	Contra